

ward—"She hesitated. I stood before her in an attitude of respectful attention—"you like to come and drink a glass of beer with me?" she asked. "I live close there."

I was on the horns of a dilemma, for while my acceptance of her invitation might land me in a somewhat embarrassing position, I was still anxious to know what her reasons were for asking me.

I bowed. "Thank you very much," I said. "I will come."

She paid her bill and departed. I opened the door for her myself, and she whispered something in my ear as she went out. Guest, who had been watching me curiously, came up a few moments later.

"You had better be careful," he said slowly. "She is not a safe woman to play tricks with."

I told Guest what had passed. He agreed with me that it was an embarrassing position; but he was insistent that I should go.

At four o'clock, I presented myself at the door of an entry at the address which had been given me. An untidy looking girl pointed out to me some stairs, over which was a hand pointing downward, and a notice, "Max Sonneberg's Rifle Range." I descended the stairs, and found myself in a sort of cellar with two tube like arrangements, down one of which a young man was shooting. Sonneberg rose slowly from a chair and came toward me.

"Paul Schmidt, is it not?" he asked.

I nodded. "I was told to come here at four o'clock," I said.

"Quite right. Now tell me, what is this?" he asked, taking from a seat near and placing in my hand a weapon, similar to the one with which the boy was shooting.

I handled it curiously. "It is a service rifle, reduced size," I remarked. He nodded. "Let me see you load it," he directed, pointing to a box of cartridges.

I obeyed him without hesitation.

He pointed to the unoccupied tube. "Shoot!" he directed.

The tube was an unusually long one, and the bull's eye rather small; but I fired six shots, and each time the bell rang. Sonneberg made a note in a book which he had taken from his pocket.

"Very good," he declared. "You have passed first class. You shall have your rifle to-night, and cartridges. Keep them in a safe place, and—remember!" He pressed a cigar upon me, and patted me on the back.

"There are some who come here," he declared, "and I find it very hard to believe that they have ever seen a rifle before. With you it is different. You will shoot straight, my young friend. A life for every cartridge, eh?"

"I was always fond of shooting," I told him.

"Come again, my young friend," he said cordially, "and show some of these others how a young German should shoot. You do not need practice; but it does me good to see a man hold a rifle as you do. So!"

I left the shooting gallery with flying colors. I was not so sure of my next appointment.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

MADAM received me with a beaming smile. I found her apartment furnished in the typical German fashion. There were two heavy mirrors, a plush table cloth, and chairs covered with stamped velvet. A canary was singing in a cage fashioned like a church; a model of a German village stood proudly upon the sideboard. One end of the room was hung with thick curtains. Madam herself had arranged her hair with a heavy black fringe, and pinned an enormous blue bow at the back of her neck.

"We will sit together here," she said, indicating the sofa, "and we will talk of England. But first you shall open the beer."

There were several bottles upon the sideboard, and a corkscrew. I poured madam out a glass, and then one for myself. Madam was already making room for me, when an inspiration came to me.

"You will drink a health with me?" I asked.

She raised her glass.

I assumed a profoundly sentimental air. "It is to a little girl in Frankfort," I said, sighing. "To *meine liebe* Elise! Soon I shall return to marry her!"

Madam raised her glass. "To Elise!" she repeated and drank nearly the whole of its contents. Then she set the glass down and looked at it thoughtfully.

"So," she murmured, "you have in Frankfort a little girl?"

"Yes, madam," I answered.

My hostess became thoughtful for a few moments. I could not flatter myself that it was disappointment which had furrowed her brow. She had, however, the air of one who finds it necessary to readjust her plans. It was during those few moments that I noticed the bulge in the curtains, concerning which I was wise enough to hold my peace.

"You will marry her some day?" she inquired.

"As soon," I answered, "as I have saved enough money. My uncle offers me the chance now. It is for that that I came back from America."

She nodded. "Money," she remarked, "is not easily made. It takes time."

"It is true," I agreed.

"And you are very anxious to be married? She is pretty, this little one?"

"I wish I had her picture, madam," I answered with enthusiasm, "that I could show you. You

would understand then that I am very anxious indeed to be married."

"But to save money," she said slowly, "it takes time that, eh?"

I could not see for the life of me what she was driving at; but I assented sorrowfully. At any rate, I was holding my own.

"Herr Paul," she said, raising her black eyes to mine, "have you ever looked about you for a way to make money more quickly?"

"I have thought of it often," I admitted; "but have not succeeded. One cannot do as these foolish English do, back horses in races they never see. Stocks and shares I do not understand. I can only work, and my uncle, though he promises much, pays little."

She nodded her head. "And all this time," she murmured, "the poor little girl waits!"

"What can one do?" I murmured dejectedly.

She motioned me to draw a little nearer to her. "Herr Paul," she said, "I think that I could show you a way to make money, a large sum of money quickly, if you had courage."

"Ah!" I drew a little closer to her.

She nodded again several times. "You are not a fool, Herr Paul," she remarked.

"I am not very clever," I answered sorrowfully; "but I do not think that I am a fool."

"You are a member of the Number One Branch of the Waiters' Union," she said slowly.

"There is no money in that," I answered. "They even want me to pay something for my own rifle." "And when the time comes," she said thoughtfully, "you will probably be shot."

"At least," I said hopefully, "I will shoot a few English first. But it is true what you say, madam."

She whispered in my ear. "The English Government," she said, "would give a great deal of money to the person who told them about that Number One Branch. It would be easily earned, eh?"

I would have risen to my feet; but she pulled me back.

"Do not be foolish, Herr Paul," she said. "What has your country done for you? When you are older and wiser, you will understand that there is only one hand worth playing for in the world, and that is your own. I hate all this talk about patriotism and the Fatherland. They are all very well for holiday times; but the first thing in the world, and the only thing, is money. I want it, and so do you. Let us earn it together."

I rose slowly to my feet. "Madam," I said, "permit me to leave. I shall try to forget what you have suggested. I love my little girl, and I love money. But never that way!"

I think that madam was a little surprised. She tried to pull me down again by her side; but I resisted.

"You are a very foolish young man," she said vigorously. "Sit still and listen to me! What would your sweetheart say if she knew that you were throwing away a chance of marrying her, perhaps next month? Who can tell?"

"Madam," I said, "if you say more, you say it at your own risk. As far as we have gone I shall try to forget. But I would like you to understand that I am not an informer."

Her face darkened. "You are afraid of running a little risk," she muttered—"a very small risk? Remember that it would be a fortune. With what I can tell you it would be a fortune for both of us, and no one need know that it was us."

I took up my hat. "Madam," I said, "I am sorry that I came. I wish you good afternoon."

I think that she had made up her mind, then, to waste no more time upon me; for with a shrug of the shoulders she rose to her feet. "I think, Herr



## FRIENDSHIPS

If you prove a friend, there are friends for you  
Who will brighten your upward way.  
There are hearts that are tender and strong and true,  
If you seek them here to-day.

But beware of the false friends who beguile,

When your way lies thro' the sun,  
They will laugh and quaff, with alluring smile,  
But they fail you, one by one.

One by one, should misfortune come,

Will they falter and fall away;  
For their hands grow cold and their lips are dumb  
When they think it will not pay.

Ah! then does the true friend prove his worth,

With his strong arm to the end—  
If a glimpse of Heaven be found on earth  
'Tis the smile of such a friend.

—Ernest Neal Lyon.



Paul," she said, "that if it had not been for the little girl in Frankfort we might have arranged this, eh?"

I shook my head. "Never!" I answered. "But if it had not been for her—"

"Well?"

"Madam knows," I answered, bowing over her jeweled fingers. "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

She let me go then, and glad enough I was to get away from the atmosphere of cheap scent and madam's stealthy advances. I realized, of course, that the whole affair was a trap, bred of this woman's suspicions of me. Nevertheless, I scarcely dared to hope that they were finally allayed. I told Guest about my afternoon's adventure, and he treated it seriously indeed.

"She is one of the most dangerous women we could possibly have to deal with," he told me. "I have known of her all my life. She was in Paris twelve years ago, and has twice brought Germany and France to the brink of war. She trusts or mistrusts wholly by instinct, and I have heard her boast that she is never mistaken. You have scored this time; but she won't let you alone. She is a regular sleuth hound."

I left a little before closing time that night, and made my way, by a circuitous route, to my cousin's club. I was shown into the strangers' room, and Gilbert came to me in a few moments.

"Jim," he said, "it's terrible, but I have failed completely to convince our friend. I haven't even made the least impression upon him. He listened to all that I had to say, with a very polite smile, and every now and then kept on taking out his watch. When I had finished, he thanked me very much; but gave me clearly to understand that he considered I had been made a fool of. I tried to persuade him to see you, but he declined point-blank. Shall I tell you his message to you?"

I nodded.

"He sent his compliments, and begged you not to neglect your winter practice. Said he had set his heart upon the county winning the championship next season."

"In plain words," I remarked bitterly, "he recommends me to mind my own business."

"It is like trying to save a drowning man, who persists in clinging to one's neck," I remarked. "Gilbert, I have had a German service rifle given me to-day, with a plain hint that I may expect to be using it within a month. I even know which of the Tilbury forts I shall be expected to help in taking."

My cousin nodded and opened out his paper.

"The Channel Squadron," he announced, "leave Devonport for Kiel on Thursday next. And here, in another part of the paper, is the little rift in the clouds. Listen!"

We understand that a slight difficulty has arisen with Germany as to the proposed Morocco commission. In view of the better understanding, however, now existing between the two Governments, a speedy agreement is believed certain.

"We shall have an ultimatum," Gilbert declared grimly, "as soon as our ships are safely anchored in Kiel harbor. Polloch may change his tone, then; but he will be a little too late. What can we do, Jim? Whom can we appeal to?"

"Heaven only knows!" I answered. "If Adèle succeeds in Paris, a hint may come from there."

"It is a slender reed," Gilbert said, "for so mighty an issue to rest upon."

I was thoughtful for a few moments. "I have had proof within the last few hours," I said, "that I am under a certain amount of suspicion, and it is possible that I am watched. Yet, after all, that is comparatively unimportant. Do you think that Polloch would see me?"

"I am sure that he would not," Gilbert answered promptly. "In fact, I may as well tell you at once that he has set us down for a pair of cranks. He dismissed me to-day almost peremptorily. And I have reason to know that he has warned other members of the Cabinet against us. He told me plainly that it was the policy of his Government to conciliate Germany, and he considered that a good deal of the ill feeling in the past had been due to the fact that we were always oversuspicious of Germany and her actions. When I spoke of organized corps of commission, of waiters and clerks here, three hundred thousand of them, all of whom had had military training and possessed rifles, he practically called me an ass."

"Gilbert," I said slowly, "we are up against an impassé. I shall go back and consult with Guest. He is the most resourceful man I know. He may be able to suggest something."

Gilbert did not attempt to detain me. We walked together across the hall of the club, of which I too, by the by, was a member, and I was careful to carry my hat in my hand. Just as we were reaching the porter's box, a man in brilliant uniform, only partially concealed by a heavy military cloak, pushed open the swing doors and entered the club. He passed us by without a glance; but my heart was in my mouth.

"Gilbert," I whispered, "who was that?"

"Count Metterheim. He is on the military staff at the German Embassy. Why?"

I looked around. Count Metterheim had passed into the smoking room, and there was no one else within ear shot. "He is also," I said, "on the committee of the Number One Branch of the Waiters' Union. I have been up before him at the Café Suisse."